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Article Name: Muscle Cramps

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Why do Muscle Cramp happen? A theory...

Question:

Hey Hunter- I had bad muscle cramps this past weekend? What do you think of the possibility of the musculature affecting the cramps?

Answer:

--A few thoughts on your cramping that I had the other day.

Your muscles have reached the point that many riders/endurance athletes reach- They have become so ripped and strong that they have literally become "hard"...i.e. they are no longer supple like they need to be. This is because of a couple of things. One-Your genetic physiology. Your body is easy to bulk up, get ripped and really, easily, build "super" muscles. Two--Lots of awesome training at a very high effort level. You have the ability to train incredibly hard and YOU know how to push yourself to the absolute limit. Many riders Never achieve this ability.

Why is this important to cramping? I have a theory (not scientifically proven, mind you), just a theory that athletes that can easily build ripped muscles are more prone to muscle cramping b/c it is hard for them to maintain suppleness. Suppleness ALLOWS your muscles to contract and relax more easily. Suppleness is, let's say 60% relaxed muscle fibers at 90% of the time and therefore those muscles are more able to contract and relax. Let's say that their natural state is in the relaxed state. In this state your range of contraction is incredibly large, let's say 0-100(100being muscle cramping). You can go from a state of complete relaxation to a state of "hyper" contraction in the split instant... Much like a cat, ever feel a cat's muscles? You can push a cat's muscles on their legs and the muscle just slips out of the force, much like a slippery piece of jello. But, if they wanted to leap to a 5' table, they could do it in an instant of telling their body to do that.

Now, the opposite side of the range is contraction. If your muscles are always 60% contracted, then you have a much, much smaller range of your range of contraction. Let's say it is limited to only 60-100... So, you can really only work the muscles in this range, AND it is much easier to reach 100(full cramp) since as the muscle becomes more fatigued it's range becomes even smaller and smaller(90-100?) and then it cramps(100).

Only by becoming extremely weak, can you become extremely hard... Like a cat....complete suppleness and relaxation but they then can explode... Relaxation is not slumping in a couch... that is just another form of tension... relaxation comes from the realization of contraction and then from using the breathe to release the contraction and cause a relaxation... A massage therapist achieves this for you. She or He SHOWS you what that feels like. That is why it feels soooo good, b/c you have been in a hyper state of contraction and only by someone showing you WHAT relaxation is, do you recognize it. Anyone could go through life like this and "think" that they are relaxed, Only to be in a 60%(?) contracted state.

So, all this said... what is the solution? The solution is to become supple !!!

How do you achieve this? You ultimately achieve this through stretching in long, smooth, breath connected poses. Yoga achieves this. Tai Chi achieves this, certainly forms of massage achieve this (rolfing, feldenkrais). But by starting with and practicing Yoga, you will begin to sense contraction and therefore you will learn to achieve relaxation of ALL your muscles through the use of the breathe and intention.

You will ask your body to release and you will create space in the joints that you never knew was there. This will begin to change the musculature to a 60% relaxed state.

Make it a healthy day.

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